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Occidental College Performing Arts Presents

Scenes from the Kun and Beijing Opera Repertoires

A Hua Kun Opera and AM 1600 English-Chinese Radio Production
February 16, 1997
Thorne Hall

Dedication

On December 13, 1996 Cao Yu, one of China's finest modern dramatists, passed away. Hua Kun Opera would like to dedicate this performance to his memory.

PROGRAM

A Wonderful Time **Kun opera**

The tale of the energetic and mischievous handmaid Hong Niang was first related in the Tang dynasty (618-907) novella *The Story of Oriole* written by Yuan Zhen. In the late 13th century playwright Wang Shifu adapted this story for his play *West Wing*, which later became the most famous of all Chinese dramatic works. The aria *Twelve Red* sung by the maid Hong Niang in this scene is one of Kun opera's most famous vocal works.

Cast (in order of appearance)

Hong Niang	Liang Guyin
Scholar Zhang	Wang Taiqi
Ying Ying	Li Zhaogan

Play Translation Lai Wenru and Susan Pertel Jain

A Banquet for Two **Kun opera**

This scene is excerpted from the classic dramatic work The Palace of Eternal Life written by Hong Sheng in the late 17th century. A native of Zhejiang province, Hong was also an accomplished poet and essayist. The most famous of his dramatic works, The Palace of Eternal Life is over fifty scenes long and recounts the relationship between the Tang dynasty emperor Minghuang and his favorite consort, Yang Yuhuan.

Cast (in order of appearance)

Emperor Minghuang	Cai Zhengren
Lady Yang Yuhuan	Hua Wenyi
Palace Eunuch	Ma Xinhua
Attendants	Li Zhaogan, Wang Liyun
	Xi Shiqi, Wang Songli
	Chen Daozhen, Lai Lingzhu

Play Translation Lai Wenru

Intermission

Farewell My Concubine **Beijing opera**

The last two hundred years of the Zhou dynasty (770-221 B.C.) is an era known as the "Warring States Period." During this time the many city-states of China battled one another for control of the country. The leaders of the individual states were called "kings." *Farewell My Concubine* depicts the struggle between the hegemon kings of Chu and Han. This play was developed by Master Beijing opera performer Mei Lanfang during the early part of this century from material found in the novel *A Thousand Pieces of Gold* and the Ming dynasty play *Struggle Between the Chu and Han*. Mei Lanfang, a male performer of refined female roles, played the role of Yu Ji, the wife of Xiang Yu, King of Chu. This play is now part of a repertoire of Beijing opera dramas which are said to embody the Mei Lanfang style of opera performance (Mei *pai*). In recent years this play has become well-known to audiences around the world through the success of Chinese director Chen Kaige's award-winning film of the same name.

Cast (in order of appearance)

Yu Ji	Li Bingshu
Xiang Yu	Su Shengyi
Watchmen	Qiu Huan
	Mu Lianzhong
Horseman	Song Zhengxi

Play Translation Lai Wenru and Susan Pertel Jain

ORCHESTRA

Melodic

jinghu, bowed fiddle	Cha Changsheng
dizi, bamboo flute	Zhou Youjun
erhu, bowed fiddle	You Shanyao
	Li Yongkang
yangqin, dulcimer	Han Zhiming
pipa, lute	Lu Peiyuan
yueqin, moon guitar	Qiu Yuhua
guzheng, zither	Zhu Langzhou
suona, a double-reed instrument	Zhou Youjun

Percussion

guban, drum & clappers	Bao Qilong
	Wang Zhensheng
xiaoluo, small gong	Wang Zhensheng
	Bao Qilong
naobo, small cymbals	Zhang Ruihai
daluo, large gong	Xie Yangshi

About the Artists

Hua Wenyi
An artist specializing in the refined female (*guimendan*) roletype, Hua Wenyi is the former Artistic Director of the Shanghai Kun Opera Opera Company and one of China's premier theater artists. Madam Hua is a recipient of the Plum Blossom Award, China's highest theater honor, and is a founding member of Hua Kun Opera. Currently Hua Wenyi serves as the organization's Artistic Director.

Cai Zhengren
Cai Zhengren is the current Artistic Director of the Shanghai Kun Opera Company and is a renown performer of younger male (*xiaosheng*) roles. Mr. Cai is also a Plum Blossom Award winner, and is a disciple of Kun opera master Yu Zhenfei

Liang Guyin
An artist specializing in the vivacious female (*huadan*) roletype, Liang Guyin is also a member of the Shanghai Kun Opera Company. Known for her versatility and her character interpretation, Madam Liang is also a Plum Blossom Award-winning artist.

Li Bingshu
A leading actress with the Shanghai Beijing Opera Company, Li Bingshu is known for both her classical and contemporary repertoires. A specialist in refined female (*qingyi*) roles, Li Bingshu is well-known to Chinese audiences for her stage as well as film roles.

Su Shengyi
Although now a Los Angeles resident, Su Shengyi is a former member of the Shanghai Beijing Opera Company where he performed painted-face (*hualian*) roles. Su Shengyi is a founding member of Hua Kun Opera and is president of E.A.I Advertising.

Susan Pertel Jain
A founding member of Hua Kun Opera, Susan Pertel Jain is a graduate of the University of Hawaii's Asian theater program where she conducted doctoral research on Chinese opera. Dr. Jain currently serves as Project Director of Hua Kun Opera.

About Hua Kun Opera

This Los Angeles-based Chinese theater organization produces educational and artistic programs introducing Kun opera and other forms of Chinese theater to international audiences. To date Hua Opera programs have appeared in the 1990 Los Angeles Festival, the Internacional de Teatro Madrid, the International Festival of Arts and Ideas in New Haven, Ct. as well as on numerous college campuses including Yale, Princeton, UC Berkeley, Columbia and UCLA.

Tonight's program is part of a project which has brought professional Chinese opera artists living in the U.S. together with their former theater colleagues who are living in China. Hua Kun Opera is proud to have been able to bring these artists to Occidental's stage and classroom as well as to the UCLA, CAL State LA, Pomona, and USC campuses. We hope that this project is just the beginning of an enduring relationship between Chinese- and U.S.-based theatre artists, and between Chinese opera companies and the academic and creative institutions of Southern California.

About Opera Forms

All of China's over 350 forms of opera forms possess elements which unite them into in a single theatrical tradition. In terms of movement style, costume, makeup, and staging, opera forms are often quite similar to one another. It is their "aural nature," namely the language spoken onstage, the instruments used in the orchestra, and the structure of the music, which set each opera form apart.

Production Staff

Program Director	Susan Pertel Jain
Stage Manager	Mu Lianzhong
Production Coordinator	Qiu Huan
Makeup/Costumes	Kang Qing and Shen Fuyun
Supertitles	Lai Wenru
Production Assistants	Ma Xinhua and Dong Weiwen
Program Design	Joan Ramo

Artistic Advisors

Yu Cheng Jing Ying	President, Spring Thunder Music Association President, Chinese Kun Opera Society
Xie Zhiliu	Visual Artist
Chen Peiqiu	Visual Artist
Ding Shaoguang	Visual Artist
Pai Hsien-yong	Novelist
Hsiao Yi	Novelist
Ling Tsai-sheng	Beijing Opera Artist

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